

NATO summit sets the stage for world war and dictatorship

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The NATO summit held this week in The Hague marks a dangerous turning point in world politics. Seventy-five years after its founding, the imperialist alliance of 32 member states has pledged to spend *at least 5 percent of GDP on the military*. This buildup is directed not only against Russia and China—it targets the working class in every country.

The summit took place just days after the illegal US-Israeli bombardment of Iran and in the midst of the ongoing genocide in Gaza. It coincided with NATO's escalating proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and mounting preparations for military confrontation with China. Behind the cynical rhetoric of “defense” and “deterrence” lies the reality that NATO is preparing for global war and the violent redivision of the world.

The 5 percent target is a qualitative shift. All NATO members are now committed to this benchmark, effectively transforming the alliance into a permanent war economy. The goal is to increase military-related spending from the current 2 percent to 5 percent of GDP within the next decade. Of this, 3.5 percent would be allocated to traditional military expenditures, such as troops and weaponry, while an additional 1.5 percent would be directed toward broader initiatives like cybersecurity, infrastructure and the construction of military facilities.

This rearmament drive would raise NATO's collective military spending from \$1.5 trillion in 2024 to \$2.8 trillion—a near doubling of war spending, not accounting for inflation or economic growth. That figure alone would exceed the entire annual GDP of countries such as Canada or Italy.

For Britain, which has a current military budget of around £60 billion, the 5 percent benchmark would mean an increase to approximately £140 billion annually—more than doubling defense expenditures.

For Germany, the implications are even more far-reaching. The ruling class is preparing to raise military spending from roughly 2 percent to 5 percent of GDP by 2029, reaching €225 billion annually. With the €100 billion “special fund” passed in 2022 and over €1 trillion in additional military packages outlined this year, German imperialism is determined to resume a “leadership role” on the world stage.

In his government statement prior to the summit, Chancellor Friedrich Merz stressed that Germany's militarization was not merely acting at Trump's behest, but acting on the basis of its “its own convictions and beliefs.” Germany, he declared, would “make the Bundeswehr the strongest conventional army in Europe,” as was rightly expected “given our size, our economic power, and our geographical location.” Merz added that Germany must now “actively and directly represent our interests” and “shape the geopolitical environment in which we live.”

In plain language: Germany is returning to a policy of militarism and great power politics, despite its historic crimes in World War I and World War II.

The implementation of these war plans and budgets requires a massive redistribution of wealth from the working class to the capitalist oligarchy and the military-industrial complex. Trillions of euros and dollars are being funneled into armaments, while public services are systematically gutted. Healthcare, education, pensions, housing, and other basic social protections are to be destroyed to pay for war.

This agenda cannot be carried out democratically. To suppress the inevitable opposition from workers and youth, authoritarian forms of rule are being prepared and implemented across all NATO member states.

The alliance's subservience to the fascist US President Donald Trump was on full display in The

Hague. European leaders bent over backwards to affirm their loyalty to Trump and the United States. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, in particular, lavished praise on Trump—reportedly even referring to him as “daddy.” The EU powers are not acting as cautious or less aggressive counterweights to US imperialism. On the contrary, they are full and willing partners in a global program of militarism, repression and barbarism.

Amid the chorus of unity, however, deep divisions within the imperialist camp are also surfacing. The NATO powers are rearming together—but they are also preparing for conflict with one another. As in the run-up to World War I and World War II, competition for markets, resources and global influence is intensifying. The very same contradictions driving the alliance into war with Russia and China are also fueling inter-imperialist rivalries that threaten to tear NATO apart.

The drive to war abroad is inseparably linked to the war against the working class at home. Just as in the early 20th century, the capitalist ruling classes are responding to internal crises—economic stagnation, social unrest and collapsing political legitimacy—by turning to war and dictatorship.

But while the capitalist system hurtles toward a third world war, the same fundamental contradictions that give rise to imperialist conflict also create the objective basis for socialist revolution. The contradiction between a globally integrated economy and the nation-state system, and the conflict between the social character of modern production and its subordination to private profit, cannot be resolved within the framework of capitalism.

This is what makes the present situation so explosive. Resistance is mounting around the world. Mass protests against the genocide in Gaza have swept through every continent. Workers are striking in record numbers against austerity and wage suppression. And in the United States, opposition to Trump and the turn to dictatorship has reached unprecedented levels. The protests against Trump two weeks ago involved more than 15 million people, the largest mass demonstrations in US history.

What is urgently required is the transformation of this opposition into a conscious political movement of the working class, armed with a revolutionary socialist program. The fight against militarism and war and the defense of democratic and social rights are inseparable

from the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system.

Stopping the drive to world war means fighting to abolish NATO, dismantle the imperialist war machine, and place the vast wealth and productive forces of society under the democratic control of the working class. This is the program of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). Its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties around the world must now be built as the new revolutionary leadership of the international working class.



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